

Alabama Medicaid Agency



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NEW MEDICAID IDS DESIGNED TO PROTECT RECIPIENTS' PRIVACY Commissioner Steckel and AG King caution to keep information safe

In an effort to protect the privacy of thousands of Alabama Medicaid recipients, the Alabama Medicaid Agency has issued new identification numbers for all people on Medicaid. The move is in keeping with a new state law prohibiting the use of Social Security numbers on items for public inspection, according to Medicaid Commissioner Carol Herrmann Steckel.

"The Alabama Medicaid Agency is committed to preserving recipients' right to privacy," said Commissioner Steckel. "At the same time, we are urging our recipients to help us by keeping their new ID numbers safe."

Attorney General Troy King joined Commissioner Steckel in stressing the importance of protecting the privacy of Medicaid information and following the law. As the new cards and numbers are being distributed, Commissioner Steckel and Attorney General King reminded consumers that they should guard this information from those who might use it to steal their benefits. They also cautioned that recipients should remember that it is illegal to lend their card or number for anyone else to use their benefits.

"The issuance of new cards and numbers is a valuable measure to protect the Social Security numbers of recipients and to help prevent identity theft," stated Attorney General King. "Just as before, consumers have to be vigilant and careful. Medicaid ID numbers and cards should be kept in a safe place and should never be used by anyone other than the assigned recipient. It is against the law to sell, alter or lend a Medicaid card or number, and those who do so may lose their Medicaid benefits and face prosecution. We are committed to protecting Medicaid benefits for the actual recipients who are entitled to them, by prosecuting identity theft as well as theft or misuse of Medicaid benefits."

Most Alabama Medicaid recipients will learn their new ID number when they receive a new plastic ID card. The card, used to verify eligibility for Medicaid covered services, will be identical to the previous card except that the 13-digit number will start with a "5" instead of a "0" and will not contain the Social Security number. Approximately 630,000 cards will be issued over several weeks starting in mid-January of 2007.

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New Medicaid ID Numbers
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Commissioner Steckel emphasized that Medicaid recipients should protect their privacy by destroying their old cards once the new ones are received. She emphasized that recipients should keep their numbers safe and should never allow them to be borrowed or used by anyone else.

Unborn babies, people who are on Medicaid in the nursing home or people who only get Medicare premiums paid by Medicaid will get a letter with the new Medicaid number instead of a card. In the case of unborn babies or those in nursing homes, the letter may be mailed to the baby's mother or nursing home patient's sponsor. Recipients, payees or sponsors who receive a letter are strongly encouraged to keep the letter for reference. Approximately 100,000 individuals will receive letters with a new ID number.

Since the old ID number will eventually be phased out, Alabama Medicaid providers are encouraged to update patient records as recipients present their new ID cards. Providers will be able to use the new number immediately although the old ID number may still be used for all claims and transactions submitted to Alabama Medicaid.

A letter explaining the change was sent to all recipients in early December. Recipients should call 1-800-362-1504 if they have questions or need to change their address.

Health care providers with questions about new ID numbers should call 1-800-688-7989 for assistance. Information may also be found on the Medicaid website at:

http://www.medicaid.alabama.gov/news/medicaid_id_numbers.aspx?tab=2

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